

Food Education: Farm links

Sustaining Farm Links



Visiting a farm, even just once, can be a life changing experience for a young person. Our aim is to enable pupils to visit a farm during their time at school in order they may better understand not only how food is produced, but have a clearer understanding of the real food choices they can make. Funding farm visits can often be an issue. Here are a few ideas that might help reduce the cost of farm visits and ways in which some schools have funded their farm links programme.

Community Transport

There are many community transport organisations that operate various projects across the country. Typically, these organisations can provide access to transport for voluntary, community and school groups, often at reduced rates. More details of community transport can be found at the Community Transport websites

www.communitytransport.org or www.ctonline.org.uk

Public transport

Some of the schools we work with are in an excellent position to be able to use public transport to get to their link farms. This is great experience for small groups of pupils and provides an opportunity to develop essential life skills. More information can be found at www.traveline.info

Walking to your local farm

Walking to a local farm is a great solution to potentially high transport costs. If your local farm is easily accessible and routes to the farm are safe, why not try walking? Some of the schools we are working with have incorporated the walk into the day's activities, for example stopping to undertake art activities, observing land use in the area or even foraging for wild foods. Why not even ask the farmer to meet you at the school so they can walk with you as well? It is a good idea to plan the route with the farmer and make stops along the way to undertake an activity or two to ensure pupils remain engaged.

Link up with your local secondary school

If you are a primary school, you may find that your local secondary school can help with transport by providing a minibus and driver as part of their community outreach work. It's worth getting in touch to see how you can work together to [raise funds](#).

Class savings account

Singlegate Primary School in Colliers Wood, London has a great scheme in order to raise money for school visits to farms. Each class in the school has a savings account, which they are responsible for keeping topped up. There are many ways the pupils raise money. For example, pupils have recently been harvesting produce from the school garden and cooking lovely seasonal recipes. The food is then sold to parents and the local community with all the profits going into the class savings account. If the class feels they need a little help in being able to afford something they can put together a presentation in order to ask the Head teacher for a loan. This great model is easily transferable to other schools.

Parent Teacher Associations

Many schools have approached their PTAs to allocate existing funds or to raise funds for farm visits. Cake sales, mufty days and fetes have all been sources of fundraising for schools. More advice on successful fundraising can be found on the PTA UK website: www.pta.org.uk

School Farmers' Markets

The Soil Association has developed a School Farmers' Market project that enables Food for Life schools to meet many of their Bronze award criteria at the same time as raising funds. The initiative involves local producers setting up stalls at your school alongside the pupils' own stalls, and selling their produce to parents and members of the community. Often the school will charge local producers a small fee for a stall and make money from selling their own garden produce and baked goods, which can then be used to fund visits to farms. For more information about establishing school farmers' markets, please visit www.foodforlife.org.uk/schools/what-can-you-do/school-farmers-markets

Higher Level Stewardship or Countryside Stewardship scheme

The Higher Level Stewardship or Countryside Stewardship scheme is an environmental stewardship scheme for farms, managed by Natural England. The scheme involves farmers managing their farmland in a way that creates, preserves and protects habitats. Part of the scheme can include 'Educational Access' whereby farmers receive funding from Natural England for hosting school visits. It is worth discussing this with your farmer to see if they are part of the scheme.

Pupil Premium

In 2011, the Government produced the Natural Choice white paper which outlined their vision for the conservation of the natural environment and how the public engage with it. In chapter four of the paper, it identifies the importance of schools utilising outdoor learning opportunities and suggests the use of the pupil premium as a way of funding such visits:

4.15 – 'We have created a Pupil Premium, intended to raise the attainment of children from low-income families. This could be used to give fairer access to nature for pupils from deprived backgrounds, for example funding school trips to experience the natural environment. It will be for schools to decide how best to use the Premium for the benefit of their pupils.'

Sell your old tech

Everyone has got an old mobile phone tucked away in a drawer somewhere. You may consider using one of the many websites on the internet to sell your old phones to raise funds for farm visits. There are loads of sites that buy a range of unwanted consumer electronics. Maybe you could ask parents for any old items and then sell them to one of the many companies out there.

Local trusts, societies and agricultural colleges

It is a good idea to investigate opportunities in your local community for outdoor education. There are many charities, trusts and societies across the UK that may be able to offer you funding towards schools visits, provide you with in-school activities or even provide free services on their sites. Agricultural shows and colleges in your local area may also be able to offer some support for farm education so why not get in touch with them? A good place to start your search is www.guidestar.org.uk

Enrichment days

Many of the schools we have worked with are using their budget for enrichment days to support farm links, often incorporating a whole week's worth of related activities. This can equally link in with the other Food for Life work you have been doing in school, such as growing and cooking. Why not visit a local farm and pick some produce, bring it back to school and cook with it using additional produce from the garden?